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ABSTRACT

In March 1994, representatives of rural Delaware school districts and community agencies met to develop information, insights, and plans that would lead to better services for all children, youth, and adults in their communities. The first part of this report summarizes the major ideas generated by small-group working sessions, and discusses the major stakeholders in designing rural schools; describes seven core issues in this design; identifies needs of children, youth and families; presents ideas for an initial action plan; provides ways in which county interagency councils and schools can work more closely; and recommends next steps. The second part consists of several resource items to assist school and community agency personnel to broaden the roles and enhance the mission of rural schools. These include a checklist for the process of crafting a profamily system of education and human services, a checklist of indicators of systems change, and a listing of key items from the National Center for Service Integration's resource briefs with a delineation of the key points identified in each. (RAH)

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DESIGNING RURAL SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SERVICE CENTERS: CONFERENCE SUMMARY AND RELATED RESOURCE GUIDE

Delaware Rural Assistance Council
and
Research for Better Schools, Inc.

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DESIGNING RURAL SCHOOLS
AS COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SERVICE CENTERS:
CONFERENCE SUMMARY AND RELATED RESOURCE GUIDE

The Context

During the spring of 1992, the Delaware Rural Assistance Council (RAC) felt it was essential that broad input be obtained from the rural community on two proposed goals of the State Board of Education that were highly relevant to rural communities: Goal 6 - continue building consensus and support for quality education, and Goal 7 - promote partnerships to improve the academic and social success of students.

Consequently, the RAC sponsored two forums designed to obtain informed testimony on these two goals. The participants in the forums proposed a number of recommendations dealing with the desirability of rural schools becoming comprehensive community learning and service centers.

Both the testimony and the recommendations asserted the view that education, health, and social service agencies must combine their resources and work better together in order to deliver their services to those who need them in the most effective manner possible. Such reconfiguration will require these delivery agencies to revamp their relationships and to redefine their individual roles in order to achieve the desired results. That often is a difficult task for the people who are in these agencies since they are deeply immersed in their traditional relationships and roles.

The purpose of the "Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers" conference, therefore, was to develop information, insights, and plans that will help the staffs of education, health, and social service agencies make decisions that will lead to better services for all children, youth, and adults in their communities.

The conference was held on March 11, 1994 at the Sheraton Inn, Conference Center in Dover. Over 140 persons who registered for the conference represented the majority of the rural school districts in Delaware (as well as several from New Jersey) and included school district administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, support staff, school board members, representatives of community health and social service agencies, and the two conference sponsors: the Delaware RAC and Research for Better Schools.

The format consisted of a morning session which involved panel discussions on "Visions and Goals" and "Practices, Problems, and Promises;" an afternoon session during which participants joined small groups to develop initial plans for their schools and communities; and a concluding session during which small groups presented their reports and recommendations. The day ended with a discussion of next steps in designing rural schools. In addition, the conference included a keynote address by Dr. Rene L. "Jay" Bouchard, President, National Rural Education Association.

The report that follows is organized into three parts. Part One includes the major ideas that were generated by the small group "working sessions" in the afternoon. Part Two includes several resource items that will assist school and community agency personnel in taking the next steps needed to broaden the roles and enhance the mission of rural schools. Part Three includes the list of persons who registered for the conference and the Partnership Groups to which the registrants were assigned.

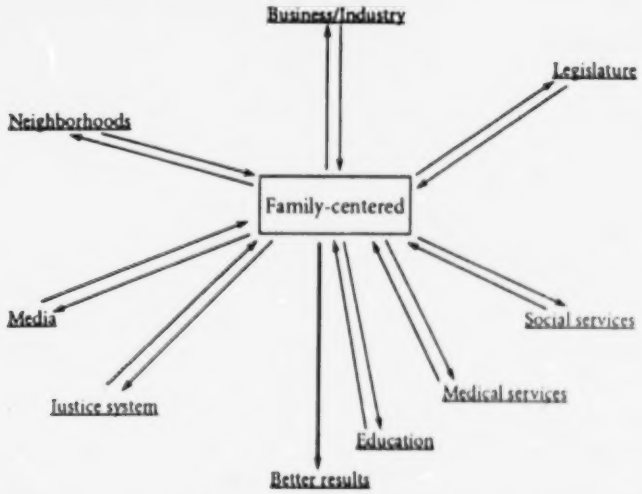
PART ONE: MAJOR IDEAS THAT WERE GENERATED

The following five charts summarize the major ideas that were generated by the participants:

- Stakeholders in Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers
- A Brief Overview of Identified Needs of Children, Youth, and Families
- A Summary of Ideas Suggested for an Initial Action Plan
- Eleven Suggested Ways in Which County Interagency Councils and Schools Can Work More Closely Together
- Twenty-five Recommended Next Steps

Stakeholders in Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers

The following graphic illustrating the various stakeholders was presented by one of the partnership groups, as were the list of seven core issues.



A number of stimuli impact the success of the family. To the extent that these forces are successful in positively supporting the family, the members of the family will -- in turn -- positively impact each of the stimuli. The final product of this self-fulfilling cycle is that society will be the benefactor of better results and that citizens will be contributors to rather than solely consumers of what society has to offer.

Seven Core Issues

- Whose values
- Resource allocation
- Flexible schedules
- Minority representation
- Prevention is less expensive than cure
- Sacrifice
- Rights and responsibilities

Seven core issues relate to the well-being of this functioning self-fulfilling cycle. First, whose values should be promoted? Resource allocation is always a central issue when dealing with limited resources and many consumers of those resources. All entities impacting the family must be able to adjust schedules in order to fully meet the demands of the changing family unit. There must be minority representation at all levels of support for the family. Prevention, in the long run, is much less costly and much more effective than cure. Individuals at all levels of society are going to have to make sacrifices in the event that this effort will be successful. And lastly, society, as a whole, must now begin the discussion of responsibilities with the passion that it has previously debated the matter of rights; this at both an individual and group level.

A Brief Overview of Identified Needs of Children, Youth and Families

The following is a brief summary of the needs that were identified by the various partnership groups.

	Children (birth through approximately 12 years)	Youth (12 to 19 years)	Families
Educational	• service availability to prevent educational delays • thinking skills/integrated writing & speaking • early testing for disabilities & health problems • expanded pre-school programs • quality day care programs (accessible at moderate costs) • alternative educational programs • tracking system for services for students with developmental problems • non-chaotic (stable home environment)	• substance abuse programs • support groups (prevention) • tutorial programs (prevention) • marketable skills • school-to-work transition • career counseling • drop-out prevention programs • alternative educational programs • tracking system for services for students with developmental problems • non-chaotic (stable home environment)	• English as second language • knowledge of how to encourage school success • acceptance at the school • school-to-work transition • parenting education & support groups • literacy training • job enhancement training • joint child/parent education activities • access to services • quality day care • non-chaotic (stable home environment)
Health	• service availability • access to services • immunizations • primary care, including dental care • preventive medicine/health care • emergency care • enhanced health screening • transportation • mental health care • pre-natal care (first 60 months) • "wellness" programs • non-chaotic (stable) home environment.	• substance abuse/treatment & counseling programs • access to services • preventive medicine/health care • emergency care • continued health screening • transportation • mental health care • "wellness" program • non-chaotic (stable) home environment	• information on available services • access to services • preventive medicine/health care • emergency care • transportation • mental health care • health education -- STD, AIDs, and reproduction advice • non-chaotic (stable) home environment

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A Brief Overview... (continued)

	Children (birth through approximately 12 years)	Youth (12 to 19 years)	Families
Social Services	• role models • value systems • organized/supervised social activities • juvenile facilities • adequate foster care • resources for minorities • contact points (case workers) for social services • access to services • non-chaotic (stable) home environment	• incentives to seek assistance • organized/supervised social activities (community centers) • juvenile facilities • adequate foster care • residential treatment facilities • sex education • contact points (case workers) for social services • access to services • non-chaotic (stable) home environment	• prevention of abuse • information on available services • family's financial role/impact on parental roles • empower family to care for its well-being • organized athletic activities • transportation • language interpretation • "real" one-stop shopping • access to services • non-chaotic (stable) home environment

A Summary of Ideas Suggested for an Initial Action Plan

The following is a brief summary of the ideas suggested by the partnership groups for an initial action plan.

What needs to be done?	Why?	What are the major project tasks? (strategies/ approaches)	Who are the primary target groups?	Who is responsible/ accountable for this work?	What resources are needed? What are the potential sources?	What is the projected timeline?
conduct community-based needs assessments	lack of knowledge on which to build program	prepare questionnaires determine means to acquire information	all families in a school district	schools and the state		
build local support and coalitions	need for everyone to feel ownership					
link with family services	need easy access; expand & diversify services	support learning activities (dropout prevention focus)	anyone with health or counseling needs	school board support	state funding sources	
improve communication between schools and agencies	communication needs to be two-way street	develop a directory of agencies and contact people; identify contacts in each school				
find most suitable locations	need to provide most acceptable place for users					
open up schools to all age groups	adults needs must be attended to	inform school boards & community of expanded programming	adults who are seeking to learn, GED, life-long learning opportunities for seniors	educators and their colleagues in community agencies	resources need to be reallocated so that school buildings are open beyond the hours of 8 to 4	
extend the school day; open schools on weekends for supervised sports/ library	provide more learning time: safe haven	provide breakfast study time (extend the learning environment)	all students	teachers responsible/ need school board acceptance	volunteers	begin now
inform the community of the program	need to spread the word	develop newsletters, hotlines, etc.	all segments of the community			
empower parents to accept responsibility for their children and youth	some parents may feel like failures or that the systems have failed them	provide incentives for parents make schools more "user friendly"	parents of at-risk children and youth	collaborative efforts of parents, schools, service agencies, media, business/ industry, churches... the entire "village"	resources to develop Family Resource Centers	

* These ideas are simply some starting points to begin designing -- and redesigning -- rural schools as community learning and service centers. Much more planning, quite obviously, needs to be done.

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Eleven Suggested Ways in Which County Interagency Councils and Schools Can Work More Closely Together

The following 11 ways in which county councils and schools can cooperate were suggested by the partnership groups.

(1) **Increase communication between schools and the county interagency councils**; communication should be a "two-way street.

(2) **Encourage all schools to be represented on and actively participate in** the work of the councils.

(3) **Conduct council meetings periodically at various schools** throughout the county.

(4) **Inform both school staff and the community about the health and social services for families** that are available from the agencies and institutions in the counties.

(5) **Present reports of specific program activities at faculty meetings** in order to make school staffs more aware of the work of the councils.

(6) **Prepare and widely disseminate a directory** of county agencies and key contact people.

(7) **Identify a single contact person in each school** so that agency personnel know the appropriate school person to contact, as needed.

(8) **Plan and implement cross-training programs** for teachers, school administrators, and health and social agency staff.

(9) **Use local** (not state) **papers to inform the general public of the existence of the councils**, their activities, and what is being accomplished.

(10) **Involve all components of the general public** (racial and religious) **as well as local businesses** in representing the school district, since the broader the base, the more it can be innovative and communicative.

(11) **Schools should actively implement**, rather than rubber stamp, **the plans** that are jointly developed.

Twenty-Five Recommended Next Steps

The participants recommended a number of actions. The first is directed to the Delaware Rural Assistance Council; the remaining ones are directed to local educational and community service agencies. The recommendations are categorized into three types: (1) **advocacy recommendations** so that all Delaware schools (not just rural schools) are affected; (2) **networking recommenda- tions**, i.e., realizing that the tasks ahead of us cannot be accomplished by any single individual or group; and (3) **planning recommendations** the largest of the remaining tasks.

Advocacy Recommendations

(1) The Delaware Rural Assistance Council should **broaden future dialogues to include more parents** -- as well as school and community agency staff -- so that action plans are built with, not for, those parents who are most directly responsible for effecting change.

(2) **Be advocates at the local and state levels** for children, youth, and families who are in greatest need of services -- from birth onward. Press for the creation of Family Resource Centers in each school district.

(3) **Bring energy to bear on changing funding patterns** to provide greater financial support for expanding school facilities and service integration programming. Such patterns should be flexible so that funds can be allocated to the areas of greatest need.

(4) **Support enabling legislation** to allow (a) more flexibility in building design, usage, and construction (since current space often does not allow for community usage); and (b) alternative systems of school-based management that might be more responsive to community needs, in general, and student needs, in particular.

Networking Recommendations

(5) **Ascertain the needs of the community** (children, youth, and families) and do not assume that we know them a priori.

(6) **Work with parents and families to teach children and youth positive value systems**, i.e., there is "another side of the value systems" than those that often are seen on the television screen.

(7) **Involve the state association of visiting teachers** to provide information and insights on school attendance issues.

(8) **"Take the show on the road,"** i.e., **communicate directly** with those in need of services so they become aware of the paths out of their adversity. (Do not only "preach to the choir.")

(9) **Make certain that community residents play meaningful roles** and have a real sense of ownership for programs developed with (not for) them.

(9) **Make certain that community residents play meaningful roles** and have a real sense of ownership for programs developed with (not for) them.

(10) **Act on the suggested ways in which county interagency councils and schools can work more closely together.**

Planning Recommendations

(11) **Plan strategically by involving many more persons in the "partnership groups."**

(12) **Consider extending the hours and days that schools are open.** (Note: This would require enabling legislation.)

(13) **Provide satellite service centers in (or near) schools** so they can be used without the school staff being totally responsible for meeting every need of everyone.

(14) **Expand kindergartens** to full time.

(15) **Expand the Wellness Centers** to the elementary grades and to full-service Family Resource Centers.

(16) **Consider near-school locations for service centers** since physical separation from the school campus might enable community members to clearly understand role distinctions.

(17) **Broaden adult education and literacy programs** so that adults who have not completed their schooling can have a second chance, thus making schools truly "community learning and service centers."

(18) **Utilize a central intake/contact person** to coordinate and assist with implementing all available services.

(19) **Share relevant information** with all agencies and schools in order to avoid duplication, conflicting "stories" -- and frustration.

(20) **Provide cross-agency training of school and agency personnel** in order to explore common problems -- and solutions.

(21) **Incorporate school-to-work activities into the program** so that school completion (or incompletion) is not a dead-end for youths or adults.

(22) **Incorporate service learning activities into the program** so that students learn to develop greater interest in serving their communities.

(23) **Open up schools** to all adults (including school dropouts) for educational, health, and social services.

(24) **Go back to your organizations and identify a liaison person or persons to follow through on these recommendations**; establish a broad-based local steering committee.

(25) **End the rhetoric; begin action planning and implementation.***

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*The resources in Part Two were compiled in order to assist in the effort to continue the action planning and implementation that is so evidently needed.

PART TWO: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resource checklists and other key items should assist you in your efforts to continue the action planning and implementation.

- Checklist 1: Process for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services
- Checklist 2: Indicators of Systems Change
- Key Items from the National Center for Service Integration's Resource Briefs

Checklist 1
Process for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services

	Yes	No	Action Required

Stage One: Getting Together

- Has a small group decided to act?
- Do the players meet the following criteria for membership in the collaborative:
  - —clout;
  - —commitment; and
  - —diversity?
- Are the right people involved, including:
  - —consumers;
  - —public-sector organizations;
  - —private providers and nonprofit organizations;
  - —businesses and business organizations; and
  - —elected officials?
- Have partners established a strong commitment to collaborate as evidenced by:
  - —deciding whether collaboration will work;
  - —agreeing on a unifying theme;
  - —establishing shared leadership;
  - —setting ground rules; and
  - —securing financial resources for the collaborative's planning efforts?
- Have partners reflected on their work and celebrated their accomplishments?

Stage Two: Building Trust and Ownership

- Has the collaborative built a base of common knowledge by:
  - —learning about each other;
  - —learning to value personal style differences and to resolve conflicts; and
  - —achieving "small victories"?

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	Yes	No	Action Required
■ Has the collaborative conducted a comprehensive community assessment that:			
—identifies indicators of child and family needs;			
—produces a profile of child and family well-being in the community;			
—assesses the existing service delivery system from the perspective of families and frontline workers;			
—maps existing community services; and			
—identifies other community reform efforts?			
■ Have partners defined a shared vision and goals for changing education and human services by:			
—learning from others' experiences;			
—asking hard questions; and			
—writing a vision statement?			
■ Has the collaborative developed a mission statement that clarifies its role in the community as a decisionmaking body?			
■ Has the collaborative communicated its vision and mission to the community and received public endorsement from the community's major institutions?			
■ Have partners reflected on their work and celebrated their accomplishments?			

Stage Three: Developing a Strategic Plan

■ Has the collaborative narrowed its focus to a specific neighborhood for launching a service delivery prototype?			
■ Has the collaborative conducted a neighborhood analysis that:			
—identifies key neighborhood leaders who should be involved in prototype planning; and			
—assesses the service delivery system in the area?			
■ Has the collaborative defined the target outcomes that its prototype service delivery design will address?			
■ Has the collaborative engaged a person to direct the prototype and involved this person in the planning process?			
■ Has the collaborative developed a strategy for involving the neighborhood's leaders, school principals, teachers, and agency directors and frontline workers?			
■ In making service delivery choices, did the collaborative:			
—select what services the prototype would offer;			

	Yes	No	Action Required
—develop criteria for assessing its prototype design;			
—determine a service delivery location that is comfortable for the neighborhood children and families;			
—consider a school location; and			
—decide how to finance the prototype's services?			
■ Has the collaborative developed the technical tools of collaboration, including:			
—interagency case management;			
—common intake and assessment forms;			
—common eligibility determination;			
—a management information system; and			
—procedures for dealing with confidentiality and sharing oral and written information?			
■ Is a mechanism in place for using program-level intelligence to suggest system-level changes?			
■ Have partners signed interagency agreements to facilitate accountability?			
■ Has the collaborative defined its governance structure so it can make policy changes at the service delivery and system levels?			
■ Is a structure in place to help the prototype director deal with operational issues as they emerge?			
■ Have partners reflected on their work and celebrated their accomplishments?			
Stage Four: Taking Action			
■ Do job descriptions for prototype staff reflect the collaborative's vision of high-quality service delivery and staff responsibility for achieving anticipated outcomes?			
■ Has the collaborative designed and implemented a comprehensive and interdisciplinary staff training program?			
■ Are mechanisms in place to facilitate communications and to nurture the relationship between prototype staff and school personnel?			
■ Is the collaborative implementing an inclusive outreach strategy?			
■ Have partners incorporated sensitivity to race, culture, and gender into the collaborative and prototype?			
■ Is the collaborative evaluating progress by:			
—using process evaluation techniques; and			
—measuring outcomes?			

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	Yes	No	Action Required
■ Have partners reflected on their work and celebrated their accomplishments?			

Stage Five: Going to Scale

■ Is the collaborative ready to adapt and expand the prototype to additional sites?			
■ Is there a strategy for developing collaborative leaders and incorporating the concepts of collaboration into partners' professional development programs?			
■ Is the collaborative working with local colleges and universities to change the character of professional education to reflect the vision of a profamily system?			
■ Do inservice training programs include strategies and tactics for collaboration?			
■ Are partners working to deepen the collaborative culture within their own organizations by: —applying the collaborative's vision; and —providing rewards and incentives for staff that demonstrate a commitment to collaboration?			
■ Is the collaborative formulating a long-range financing strategy?			
■ Has the collaborative built a formal governance structure?			
■ Does the collaborative have a strategy for building and maintaining a community constituency for its work?			
■ Is the collaborative promoting change in the federal government's role in delivering services for children and families?			
■ Is the collaborative continuing to reflect and celebrate as it "climbs the mountain" of systems change?			

Checklist 2
Indicators of Systems Change

	Yes	No	Under Consideration	Rejected	Next Steps
Are interagency agreements in place? ■ Are they reviewed periodically? ■ Are agency agreements negotiated with the clear understanding that they are meant to be binding? ■ Are policies in place to address agreements broken in "bad faith"?					
Do program-level information and intelligence trigger policy-level changes across multiple systems? ■ Is there a case management system or other method for collecting information on a case-by-case basis to determine what services children and families need that are not available and what barriers prevent them from using services that are available, including transportation, cultural and interpersonal issues, and eligibility rules? ■ Is there a person or committee designated to analyze this information, to identify those barriers that could be resolved by policy-level actions, and to summarize findings? ■ Is there a procedure in place to ensure that the collaborative reviews this information? Has action been taken as a result?					
Have partners developed shared information systems? ■ Is there ready access to each other's records? ■ Are shared confidentiality protocols in place? ■ When agencies implemented and expanded computer systems, did they take into account interagency access capabilities and information-sharing needs? ■ Have agencies replaced separate in-house forms to gather the same kind of information with a common form used by all members or other organizations to establish program eligibility? Assess case management needs? Develop case plans?					

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	Yes	No	Under Consideration	Rejected	Next Steps
Have partner agencies incorporated the vision and values of the collaborative at their administrative and staff levels?					
■ Have partners altered their hiring criteria, job descriptions, and preservice or inservice training to conform to a vision of comprehensive, accessible, culturally appropriate, family-centered, and outcome-oriented services?					
■ Have partners changed the design hours, and location of waiting rooms and interviewing offices, or revised the nature of services?					
■ Has there been cross-training to share factual information among all of the agencies working together to provide school-linked services?					
■ Have partners developed training to help staff consider the extent to which they are willing to let collaborative's goals and objectives influence their day-to-day interaction with each other and with children and families?					
■ Is there a change in the way teachers, principals, and service providers relate to each other? To their students? To others they serve?					
■ Are redirected staff assigned to work in school-linked centers keeping in touch with policies and agencies?					
■ Is there basic agreement on who they need to serve, what they should be doing, and what results they should expect?					
■ Are outcome goals clearly established?					
■ Has the collaborative used its data collection capacity to document how well children and families are faring in their communities and how well agencies and child-serving institutions are meeting their mandates?					
■ Are these data used strategically both within the collaborative and in the larger community to advance the collaborative's goals?					
■ Are outcomes measurable? Do they specify what degree of change is expected to occur in the lives of children and families during what period of time?					
■ Is shared accountability a part of outcomes that reflect education, human service, and community goals and objectives?					
■ Is public accountability established?					

	Yes	No	Under Consideration	Rejected	Next Steps
■ Are periodic community report cards released and public meetings and forums conducted to keep the public apprised of specific collaborative accomplishments and overall progress toward improving key indicators of community well-being?					
Has the collaborative devised a financing strategy to ensure long-term funding?					
■ Are plans in place to support new patterns of service delivery beyond the prototype level?					
■ Have partners drawn a financial resource map to identify major funding sources entering the community?					
■ Have partners contacted state liaisons to explore how current funding sources could be channeled and maximized to support prevention-oriented services?					
Has the collaborative gained legitimacy in the community as a key vehicle for addressing and resolving community issues regarding children and families?					
■ Does the collaborative have a voice that is heard in the community?					
■ Are the collaborative's positions on community issues supported by commitments from public and private service providers, the business community, and the church- and neighborhood-based organizations whose members are often most directly affected by collaborative decisionmaking?					

Source:

Melaville, A I., Blank, M. J., & Asayesh, G. (1993). Together we can: A guide for crafting a profamily system of education and human services. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistance Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Copies are available from New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, OA 15250-7954. The stock number is 065-000-00563-8, the price is $11. (FAX credit card orders: 202-512-2250.)

Key Items from the National Center for Service Integration's Resource Briefs

The National Center for Service Integration has published a series of Resource Briefs in the following six areas:

#1 So You Think You Need Some Help? Making Effective Use of Technical Assistance by Charles Bruner

#2 Charting a Course: Assessing a Community's Strengths and Needs by Charles Bruner, et al.

#3 Who Should Know What? Confidentiality and Information Sharing in Service Integration by Mark Soler and Clark Peters

#4 Getting to the Bottom Line: State and Community Strategies for Financing Comprehensive Community Service Systems by Frank Farrow and Charles Bruner

#5 Getting Started: Planning a Comprehensive Services Initiative by Carolyne Marzke and Deborah Both

#6 Making it Simpler: Streamlining Intake and Eligibility Systems by Allen Kraus and Jolie Bain Pillsbury

Each of these documents contains much valuable information about a great deal of insight into the issues discussed at the Delaware RAC conference. The documents are available for $4.00 each (shipping/handling included) by contacting:

National Center for Service Integration
5111 Leesburg Pike, Suite 702
Falls Church, VA 22041
(703) 824-7447
(703) 671-7208 (FAX)

Some of the most relevant items from these documents that may be most useful in planning and implementing service integration programs are as follows.

From Resource Brief #1 -- on using technical assistance

Key Points in Making Effective Use of Technical Assistance in Service Integration Initiatives:

- **Identify,** as clearly as possible, **the problems for which outside technical assistance is sought** and the ways that technical assistance can be useful in identifying and implementing solutions.
- **Enlist the cooperation, support, and involvement of key individuals** within the initiative in securing the outside technical assistance.
- **Gain a clear commitment** from initiative participants to share the initiative's "real" problems with the provider so that disputes can be resolved promptly and not hinder progress.

- **Identify the skills needed** from the technical assistance provider, both related to technical expertise and process expertise, and the scope and duration of the technical assistance that will be needed to complete the task.

- **Establish a process for selecting a technical assistance provider** that both clarifies what the expectations of the provider are and allows the initiative to select a provider with the necessary skills.

- **Conduct reference checks** that cover all key aspects of the provider's responsibilities under the current initiative, and seek personal contact prior to selection to ensure that the provider is compatible with all participants in the initiative.

- **Assure that the technical assistance provider serves the needs of the initiative as a whole** and does not represent (or appear to represent) a single organizational or professional interest within that initiative.

- **Develop a mechanism of communications** through which both the technical assistance provider and the initiative's members are kept informed of all relevant work activities within the initiative.

- **Establish clear expectations** for the technical assistance provider, including a framework for evaluating the provider's work continually through the process.

- **Make clear that the relationship is interactive** and that the expectation for the provider is to impart skills to initiative members -- so they can address future problems and challenges without as much need for outside assistance (p. 19).

From Resource Brief #2 -- on assessing community strengths and needs

In conducting a community assessment, **the following list of attributes** can help assure that information is not collected needlessly, but helps to direct and guide the actions of the community collaboration. In brief, a good community assessment:

- **is based on goals** the initiative establishes

- **helps answer questions** raised by the goals

- **establishes benchmarks** that help chart the initiative's progress to meet the goals

- **identifies existing resources** (public and community) and services available within the community, and the areas of service gaps and weaknesses

- **engages and involves key service providers and constituencies** in better understanding and working with one another

- **distinguishes needs and resources** within different neighborhoods and cultural or associational communities

- **makes efficient use of available information**, but is not driven by data availability

- **involves potential service users** and neighborhood and community residents in identifying needs and solutions

- **establishes commitment among a broad base of participants** to take action and meet goals (p. 33).

From Resource Brief #3 -- on confidentiality and information sharing

The following is a checklist of points that agencies should consider and address in developing procedures for sharing information within and across agencies:

- **Consider the reasons for ensuring the confidentiality** of information about children and families.
- **Decide on the specific information** the agency needs.
- **Clarify the reasons** why the agency needs the information.
- **List the information** that the worker's agency will share with other agencies.
- **Describe the purposes** of information sharing among agencies.
- **Study the applicable legal provisions**, particularly federal and state statutes and regulations.
- **Make provisions for clearly explaining the importance** of consent to clients.
- **Pay attention to the need for sensitivity** to language and cultural issues.
- **Develop agency or multi-agency requirements** for informed consent and necessary elements for written releases.
- **Specify the role of interagency agreements, court orders, and other mechanisms** that facilitate interagency information sharing without the consent of clients.
- **Review the special issues** that arise from the use of automated management information systems (p. 19).

From Resource Brief #4 -- on financing strategies

Strategies that states and communities can use to incorporate these principles into service system reforms include some combination of the following:

- **Pooling** funds across agency lines to achieve common goals.
- **Delegating** greater authority over the use of existing funding streams to community policymaking and administrative systems.
- **Redeploying** existing funds from higher cost services toward lesser cost, alternative services.
- **Refinancing**, through greater use of federal entitlement programs, accompanied by **reinvestment** to expand the funding base for services.
- **Leveraging** private sector and foundation funds to expand the funding base for services or to cover the start-up costs for system reform.

- **Investing** new funds, based on long-term cost benefit analysis, into prevention-oriented services with clear outcome accountability (p. 23)

From Resource Brief #5 -- on planning initiative

Common elements found in effective collaborations include:

- **Strong leadership** at all levels of government, within the community, and among funding institutions.
- **A climate for change**, established in part by prior experience with collaboration or cooperation, and the availability of start-up funds.
- **Diverse membership**, which draws from a broad range of community service sectors and is representative of the community's cultural and ethnic groups.
- **Flexibility and adaptability.**
- **Formal and informal structures and processes** for resolving communication problems and turf conflicts.
- **An outcomes orientation and accountability** for achieving results.
- **A clear, shared vision, and goals** developed with the full participation of the membership, usually based on data obtained through a community needs assessment.
- **Relationships among members** built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding.
- **A core staff** responsible to the collaborative as a whole (p. 6).

From Resource Brief #6 -- on intake and eligibility

Sample Work Plan for Streamlining Intake and Eligibility Systems

Phase One: Overall Planning and Orientation

- Create a core team of senior managers.
- Create an extended team of staff to support the core team.
- Develop measurable goals such as: reduce the time from initial contact to service delivery by 50 percent; reduce the number of intake contacts to one; apply freed intake resources to provide direct services and to gain cost reductions.

Phase Two: Thorough Assessment of Current Process

- Document the current process: process flows and descriptions; work flow sequences; procedures; performance characteristics (volume, time, and number of contacts); resources users (people, computers); quality and extent of service integration.
- Involve constituent groups.
- Conduct customer and staff surveys, focus groups.
- Assess information systems.
- Review how other places do similar business and use this as a benchmark.

Phase Three: Developing Alternatives

- Use the core team to develop alternatives, using analysis and brainstorming.
- Test the alternatives with constituent groups.
- Identify benefits and costs, and compare them to goals.
- Develop both quick fix and long-term alternatives.

Phase Four: Developing an Implementation Plan

- Identify tasks and required resources.
- Identify the people responsible.
- Use project management tools to sequence the tasks.
- Estimate benefits and costs, and relate them to goals.
- Focus on quick fixes and long-term solutions.

Phase Five: Implementation

- Prepare details of the "reengineering" work required.
- Set up the computer systems design, purchase and install equipment.
- Develop the staff.
- Convert from the old to the new system (p. 27).

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Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers

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